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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ATHENS 001643

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

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SUBJECT: Ambassador's Meeting with Minister of Citizens' Protection
Chrysochoidis

REF: ATHENS 1593

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Greek Minister of Citizens' Protection Michalis Chrysochoidis provided Ambassador Speckhard with an outline on November 12 of his ambitious plan to reorganize and energize all of Greece's civilian security agencies, including the national police, the domestic intelligence service, the Coast Guard, and the firefighters. Chrysochoidis decried the "collapse" of the security securities under the previous New Democracy (ND) government, which left Greece unable to confront the twin challenges of domestic terrorism and organized crime. For this reason, Chrysochoidis has brought all civilian security agencies into his newly created ministry; made personnel changes in the leadership of the police, domestic intelligence, and the firefighting service; narrowed the mission of the Coast Guard to almost solely maritime border security; changed the heads of the police's CT unit and its departments; created an interagency mechanism to foster collaboration; and proposed creating a new 100-person agency to fight organized crime as a mini-FBI. Chrysochoidis welcomed U.S. assistance in his reorganization, particularly training. A follow-on meeting the next day between DCM McCarthy and Deputy Minister Vougias revealed that Vougias will focus primarily on migration and road safety issues. The DCM also explained a variety of ways in which Greece and the United States could cooperate on the range of law enforcement issues, and urged Vougias to place officers in posts where their U.S.-provided training could be put to good use. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The Ambassador began the 50-minute meeting by expressing the Embassy's full support for the Ministry of Citizens' Protection's (MCP) work on counterterrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and human smuggling. He asked Chrysochoidis for his best assessment of the new domestic terrorist and anarchist groups that were active in Greece, specifically the nature of any connections between them. Chrysochoidis replied that Greece is the only European country to be confronted with second-generation domestic terrorism. Similar phenomena in Western Europe, such as the Baader-Meinhof group and the Red Brigades, burned themselves out in the 1970s and 1980s. While there was a brief resurgence of domestic terrorism in Italy in the 1990s, that movement, too, was undone by good law-enforcement work and internal tensions. In Greece, however, there has been continuity in domestic terrorism since the mid-1970s, and the current terrorist groups, while not

immediately linked to such predecessors as 17 November and ELA, nevertheless are very much the heirs to their activities.

13. (S) Chrysochoidis said that while one can speak of domestic terrorism writ large, it was important to distinguish between the three most prominent groups:

-- The Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (SFP) has many people but produces relatively low-level activity. It is more a movement than a real organization. It deserves attention chiefly because it is a source for recruitment into other organizations. It may well have been directly inspired by convicted bomber Nikolas Maziotis, since the language and ideology of his written court defense in 2000 are almost identical with the wording, views, and spirit of the most recent published proclamations by SFP.

-- Revolutionary Struggle (EA) and Sect of Revolutionaries (SE) originally were one organization but split over internal tensions. Of the two, SE is the more violent, since it is composed of "assassins without ideology" who "hate society." By contrast, EA has an ideological basis. Chrysochoidis said that it was his suspicion that EA had connections to the Middle East, since some of its members -- the intellectuals of EA, not the operators -- have been observed to frequent the Iranian Embassy in Athens and to travel extensively to such countries as Iran and Lebanon. Some may

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have ties to Hamas. EA seeks publicity and so engages in visible attacks that will make headlines in the media. In this regard, EA's attack against the American Embassy in 2007 was illustrative.

14. (C) Greece currently is not positioned to combat this threat, according to Chrysochoidis. When PASOK was in power in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it made great strides in creating a modern security apparatus. In fact, by the time of the Olympic Games in 2004 Greece had succeeded in forming a counterterrorist model of interagency cooperation that was the prototype for the rest of Europe. However, the New Democracy government that came to power in 2004 created "a new reality" in Greece's security services, which subsequently collapsed. Chrysochoidis said that he was particularly worried about the collapse in the capabilities of the police force. In his opinion, organized crime is the "main enemy of social cohesion." It has infiltrated the official economy, as well as stepping up its traditional activities in weapons smuggling, money laundering, human trafficking, and counterfeiting. In addition, authorities increasingly are seeing a link between organized crime and domestic terrorists. Finally, both issues-counterterrorism and organized crime-cannot be detached from their regional context. "Greece has bad neighbors," Chrysochoidis stated. Albania is a major source of organized crime, as evidenced by the arrest recently of an Albanian trafficker in women who had a bank account containing 5 million euros and 5 ships worth a total of 45 million euros. The problem of illegal immigration cannot be solved without the assistance of Albania and especially Turkey, he said.

15. (C) For this reason, Chrysochoidis has decided to reorganize and reenergize Greece's entire non-military security system with the following goals:

-- First, he has brought together into the new MCP all elements of domestic security, including the police, EYP, the firefighters, and the Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG). Chrysochoidis acknowledged that he was radically changing the nature of the Coast Guard, sending all of its functions but maritime border security to the Ministry of the Economy, Competitiveness, and Merchant Marine. The new agency will have about 7,000 officers and--under a draft law to be introduced in about three months--a new name reflecting its core

mission. (NOTE: What is conventionally called the Hellenic Coast Guard [HCG] in English is actually called in Greek the Harbor Corps or the Port Police Corps [to Limeniko Soma], so Chrysochoidis is proposing a name in Greek consistent with its new mission to guard Greece's coast [aktofylaki]. The functions of the port police will migrate to the Ministry of the Economy, Competitiveness, and the Merchant Marine. The Commandant, Admiral Retzemperis, resigned over this change. END NOTE)

-- Second, he has changed the leaderships in both the Hellenic National Police (HNP) and the firefighting service. Chrysochoidis stressed that while it was important to introduce organizational changes in the firefighting service, it was as important to change public perceptions that fires are fought by helicopters from the air and not by firefighters on the ground.

-- Third, he is reorganizing entirely the counterterrorist structures. He repeated that Greece's counterterrorist system had collapsed under New Democracy. So he has appointed a new chief for the HNP's counterterrorist unit (HNP/CTU), Alkiviadis Tzoitis, who is "a good officer, very operational, very smart." He worked on security for the Olympics and has previous experience in EYP. In addition, Chrysochoidis has changed all the department heads in HNP/CTU.

-- Fourth, to foster interagency cooperation Chrysochoidis is creating a mechanism to enhance cooperative ties between HNP/CTU, EYP, and State Security. He claimed that the three agencies had ceased speaking to each other under the previous

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government, but he was determined to create cross-agency ties through personnel appointments and this new formal consultative mechanism.

-- Fifth, Chrysochoidis announced that he intends to create a new agency along the lines of a "mini-FBI" devoted to combating organized crime, including cybercrime and trafficking, that will consist of 100 officers, including economists, scientists, and computer specialists, and that will be part of the Attica Security structure. Chrysochoidis said that the Greek side will need U.S. training to bring this agency up to the necessary level of competence. In fact, he stated, Greece is open to all forms of cooperation with the United States in security matters and needs U.S. assistance to help it do so.

16. (C) The Ambassador replied that the United States would so all that it could to help Greece. He noted as an example that the U.S. side was ready to put a special agent and an analyst from DEA in a potential new Greek task force on organized crime. He then asked for Chrysochoidis' prediction on the nature of the annual demonstrations -- and their anti-American orientation -- marking the events of November 17, 1974. Chrysochoidis thanked the Ambassador for his readiness to help his reorganization efforts and said that he would be approaching appropriate elements in the months ahead with specific requests for help. Turning to the annual November 17 demonstration, he predicted that it would be relatively quiet this year. Instead, anarchists and terrorists instead are gearing up for violence in December to mark the anniversary of the nation-wide riots in 2008 that occurred after the accidental shooting on December 6 of a 15-year-old by a policeman. According to information that the police have collected, Greek anarchists are inviting their "brothers" in other European countries, chiefly Spain, Italy, France, and Germany, to come to Greece and engage in violent acts. For this reason, Chrysochoidis declared, the MCP is formulating a plan that will ensure a safe environment in December.

17. (C) The ambassador thanked Chrysochoidis for the resources that the MCP devotes to keeping the embassy safe and repeated American readiness to help the MCP with its reorganization. He suggested that Chrysochoidis might find it useful to read a 2-page summary of

a longer study coordinated with the State Department about the fires in Greece. The DCM added that the embassy could provide a copy on a CD of the U.S. National Response Plan that had been revised following Hurricane Katrina, since parts of it might be useful to Chrysochoidis in considering structural changes within the MCP.

18. (C) Following on the Ambassador's meeting, the DCM met with MCP Deputy Minister Spyros Vougiaris on November 13. Vougiaris stated that his portfolio will deal mainly with migration issues, and road safety. Vougiaris admitted that Greece "could be better" on anti-trafficking, and foreshadowed plans to create a division within the MFA to coordinate Greek efforts across their interagency, which the DCM welcomed. The DCM laid out for Vougiaris how the Embassy is set up to work on law enforcement and terrorism issues with Greece, and urged Vougiaris to ensure that Greek officers who received U.S. training were placed in assignments where their training could be put to use. On immigration issues, Vougiaris commented that the MOJ and MOI needed to address the asylum issue, as Greece's 0.1% granting rate was "too low;" he lumped immigration with the economy and unemployment as among Greece's biggest challenges. He was not overly concerned about November 17 demonstrations, but stressed that the government would not let a repeat of last December's riots happen again this December. The DCM highlighted the January visit of a DS/ATA Anti-Terrorism Assistance assessment team to Greece, noting our hopes for close cooperation with the government; Vougiaris agreed the visit would be

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productive, and looked forward to it. He stressed his intent to improve professional education for the rank-and-file police, and was frank in describing the double standard under which Greek police operate: "society wants police everywhere, but then criticizes the police when they act." In closing, the DCM assured Vougiaris that VWP preparations were complete, and the last question was how Greece and the U.S. could agree to roll out this positive news.
Speckhard